

*The Church a Body : Or Spiritual
Incorporation.*

1021. 6 18.
2

A SECOND
CHARGE
Deliver'd to the
CLERGY
OF THE
ARCH-DEACONRY
OF
MIDDLESEX.

By R. ALTHAM, D. D. *Arch-
Deacon of Middlesex.*

L O N D O N,
Printed for *John Morphew*, near *Stationers-
Hall.* 1718.



as
th
an
do
C
en
w
a
W



A SECOND CHARGE, &c.

Reverend Brethren;



HE present divided Condition of the Christian Communion amongst us, and the further Distractions of it which seem apparently to threaten us, as they are melancholick Circumstances that may deserve the utmost Compassion and Concern of all good Christians; so do they more peculiarly call for, The Care and Application of those who are entrusted with that Sacred *Depositum*, which does oblige Us, *Ὁρδομεῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας*, *Rightly to divide the Word of Truth.*

A 2

And

And therefore that we may not seem wanting in our Duty to the Church of God, I shall upon this present Consultation, offer you some Thoughts, which by your better Improvement, and the Blessing of God attending your good Endeavours, may, I hope, prove in some measure useful towards the settling these Distractions: Or if we may not prove so happy as to convince all Gainfayers, yet at least, by a just Apology for our Holy Communion, we may give our own Consciences that Quiet and Assurance, that we are under the Enjoyment of a truly Catholick and Apostolick Communion.

It was observ'd in the Close of my last, that we are all of Us oblig'd by our Creed to profess, One Holy Catholick Church, One Communion of Saints; And therefore it is Catholicism, which must be the true Note or Character to distinguish the Truth of Communion from all false Claims or Pretensions to it.

Catholicism therefore does not only Denote what the Grammatical Notion of it offers, Universality of Time and Place, but does also further connote the Truth
of

of that Thing which from thence is denominated Catholick, *i. e.* the Truth of Communion.

And Communion in its proper Notion includes a Right and Title to all such Benefits, Privileges and Advantages, as are granted to any Community, or Society, and which may be in common enjoy'd by all the Members of that Society, upon Condition of their acting according to the Rules and Laws of that Charter by which the Community does subsist.

Hence it is we may clear a Notion which runs through all the Writings of the most Primitive and Orthodox Fathers in all their Disputes against either Hereticks or Schismaticks, *viz.* How it is that a Particular Church may be truly call'd Catholick, without giving any Advantage to the Cause of the Church of *Rome* by it. I shall trouble you at present but with one Instance to shew the Fact of it from *St. Augustine* in his Disputes with the Donatists of his Time, in his Epistle to *Vincentius*, Ep. 48. *Cum Civitas mea tota esset in parte Donati, timore Legum Imperialium, ad unitatem Catholicam conversa est.* Here we see the Donatists, whilst
in

in a State of Separation, are by him reckon'd to be a Party or Faction only, whilst his own particular Church of *Hippo* is call'd by him the Catholick Communion.

Upon this Foot it is I would endeavour to vindicate the Catholicism of the Communion of the Church of *England*, against the Claims of all Separatists of all kinds whatsoever, whether Papists or others: Which may, I hope, be done by a clear Proof of the Propositions following, that

1. The Church is a Body or Spiritual Incorporation.

2. Jesus Christ is the Head of that Body.

3. Jesus Christ never left One Universal Visible Head of that Body, not *St. Peter*, nor consequently his Successors. For

4. The rest of the Apostles had the same Power with *St. Peter*, and the same Title too of being Foundations.

5. The Bishops succeeded the Apostles in their ordinary Office of Government, within their limited particular Districts.

6. And therefore every Bishop in his own Church is to be look'd upon as the Vicar of Christ, and first Principle of Unity.

7. Hence it follows that the Catholick Church Militant upon Earth, is an Aggregate Body of Particular Churches.

8. Hence accordingly Catholick Communion must depend upon particular Communion.

9. And therefore whosoever does voluntarily refuse Communion with the particular Bishop of that Jurisdiction wherein he lives, without Just Cause, is not only a Schismatick from Him, but also from the Catholick Church.

A clear Proof of these Propositions may, I hope, be sufficient not only to lead us into the Reason for, but to shew us also the true Nature of Catholick Communion.

And therefore to proceed orderly, we must endeavour to prove,

1. That the Church of Christ is a Body, or Spiritual Incorporation.

This is the Foundation of the whole, and this Question has been generally taken for a *Postulatum*, a Proposition suppos'd and granted, rather than disputed.

This

This the Romanists, and indeed all the Separatists of all kinds whatsoever, who think the Interests of Religion cannot be supported without a due and orderly Government, do allow us; and was never yet put upon the Question, 'till our modern Epicureans first rais'd the Scruple. Who because they dare not under the Manifest Light of a Gospel Revelation, wholly deny the Existence of a God, have therefore, like their old Master, endeavour'd to set him as far out of their sight as possibly they can; and deny to him that Power and Providence, without which the Good Government of the World cannot subsist, make him an idle and unconcern'd Spectator of Human Affairs, and then invest themselves with all the Powers and Prerogatives of what they vainly think a dethron'd Omnipotence.

Hence is it we have those loose and confounding Principles; for Confusion is the Natural Consequence of them, which have of late been so industriously spread among us, cultivated and propagated with all the cunning craftiness of Deceit; such is that in the Civil Polity, that all Power is originally from the
People,

People, and therefore accountable to them only, such again is that in the Sacred Polity, That every Man by his own private Judgement or Discretion, is or may be the Author of his own Religion to himself, both in its Principle and Practice; and thus being got loose from God Almighty's Authority, set up for such a Liberty and Latitude of Free-thinking, as leaves them uncontrol'd, unaccountable to any other Being but themselves, either for their Principle or their Practice.

This being then the Occasion of disputing this Question, and our present Thoughts being determin'd to the Consideration of the Sacred Polity only, it will concern us to consider, how far the Notions of these Libertines in Thought, do or do not agree with the Positive Institutions of God Almighty in the Establishment of the Sacred Polity.

We have of late been surprisingly entertain'd with such a Notion or Definition of the Church, as has I think, never yet been heard of since the first Establishment of the Christian Society, *viz.* That it is no more than such a Number of People as are in Gods Eternal Purpose
 B design'd

design'd for everlasting Happiness ; now where there is a Community 'tis true indeed there must be Number, but then that alone will not give us a clear and distinct Idea of what we call a Community or Society. And therefore God Almighty tells us he made all Things not only in Number, but in Weight and Measure too, he tells us he is a God of Order, not of Confusion ; for in this the Happiness of a Community does consist, that its Number be under an orderly and regular Direction, guided and conducted by wise Laws and Rules, not only to the private Advantage of each Particular, but to the publick Quiet and Harmony of the whole ; and therefore the Scriptures represent the Church, not only as a casual confus'd Number, but as a regular and duly Organiz'd Body.

Thus *Ephes. 1. v. 12, 13. Christ is given to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body.* So again, *cap. 4. v. 15, 16. That we may grow up into him in all things which is the Head even Christ, from whom the whole Body fitly joyn'd together, and compacted by that which every Joynt supplyeth, according to the effectual Working in the Measure*

Measure of every Part, maketh Increase of the Body to the edifying of it self in Love.

And this Organiz'd or Imbody'd Number is represented in Scripture, sometimes under the Character of a Natural Body, as we see in general by the fore-cited Places of the Apostle, but more particularly by St. Paul, in his 1 Ep. to the Cor. ch. 12. v. 12. *For as the Body is One, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that One Body, being many are One Body, even so is Christ, i. e. Christs Church; and so on to the end of that Chapter, where he elegantly sets forth the due Organization of the several parts for supporting the Beauty and Harmony of the whole, That there should be no Schism in the Body, as we are told v. 25.*

Sometimes again the Church is represented in Scripture as a Political Body, and to shew us that it really is so, it is there represented under all the different Kinds of Political Incorporations, for instance,

1. Sometimes as a Family of which Christ is the *Οικοδεσποτης*, So *Ephes. 3. 15. Of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is nam'd: So also Heb. 3. 6. But*

Christ as a Son over his own House, whose House we are. Hence Christians are call'd, Οἰκεῖοι Θεῶ, and Οἰκονομοί. The Dwelling-sticks of God, Ephes. 2. 19. Matth. 10. 25. And St. Paul tells Timothy, that the Church of the living God is the House of God, as well as the Pillar and Ground of Truth. And lastly our Saviour himself tells his Disciples, If they have call'd the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his Household, Matt. 10. 25. Again

2. The Church is sometimes represented in Scripture, as a City or larger Incorporate Society, whereof Christ is the chief Magistrate. So Heb. 12, v. 22, 23, 24. *But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable Company of Angels; to the general Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of Just Men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.*

So also Gal. 4. 26. *Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all. So likewise Eph. 2. 19. We are said to be Συμπολίται τῷ ἁγίῳ, Fellow Citi-*

zens

zens of the Saints ; so also *Phil. 3. 20.*
Τὸ πολίτευμα ἡμῶν, Our *Citizenship* or
 Right to the Privilege of Citizens, is said
 to be in Heaven, from whence also we
 look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Church is sometimes repre-
 sented in Scripture as a Kingdom where-
 of Christ is King. Thus it was fore-
 told by the Angel to the Virgin Mary,
Luke 1. 33. *He shall reign over the House*
of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom
there shall be no end. Thus it was de-
 scrib'd by the Prophet *Ezekiel, c. 37. v.*
22. 24, 25. *I will make them one Nation*
in the Land upon the Mountains of Israel,
and one King shall be King to them all,
and they shall be no more two Nations, nei-
ther shall they be divided into two King-
doms any more at all. And David, my
Servant, shall be King over them, and they
shall all have one Shepherd, and my Ser-
vant David shall be their Prince for ever.
 Thus it was preach'd by *St. John Bap-*
tist, the Fore-runner of our Saviour, Re-
pent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at
hand. Mat. 3. 2. And when our Saviour
 was asked by *Pilate, Art thou the King*
of the Jews, he affirm'd it by answering,
Thou say'st it ; and at the same time tells
 him

him, *For this end came I into the World, that I should bear Witness to the Truth.* And though our Saviour does affirm that his Kingdom is not of this World, *i. e.* not of the same Kind with the Sovereignities and Dominions of the Civil Polity, yet he sufficiently shews it to be a Kingdom in this World, when upon his Declaration, *That all Power is given him both in Heaven and in Earth*; he commissions his Apostles to go and profelyte or disciple all Nations, to baptize and teach them all whatsoever he had commanded them, and promises he would be with them [in this their Administration of his Spiritual Kingdom] even unto the end of the World, *Matt. 28. v. 18, 19, 20.* And this *St. Paul* plainly shews us to be the Mediatorial Kingdom of our Saviour, which was to be administer'd in this World. For when the end cometh, he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father, for he must reign till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet, the last Enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. And when all things shall be subdu'd unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject, that God may be all in all, *1 Cor. 15. v. 24, 25, 26. 28.* More might be urg'd, as
St.

St. *Peter's* calling him, the Prince of Life, *Acts* 3. 15. and calling his Church, a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, an Holy Nation, which were the peculiar Boasts of the Carnal, but are now translated to the Spiritual, *Israel* 1 *Ep.* c. 2. v. 9.

But this may be sufficient to let us see how the Oracles of God represent the State and Condition of the Church, not as an uncertain, casual, confus'd Number, but as an organiz'd, well order'd, duly regulated Body or Incorporate Society.

And all that the weak Oracles of Reason have to say against all this, is no more than that these are only Figurative and Parabolical Representations, and that the Argument for the Truth of any thing is but very weak, which is drawn only from a Similitude. But are these Arguings becoming Creatures to their Creator, as if it could be either the Interest or Design of God Almighty to impose upon his Creatures, either with weak or false Reasoning; Truth and Goodness are his Attributes, what he says to us must be true; what he does for us, as it is Gracuitous, so it must be Good.

How-

However, since the Manifestations of the Spirit and of Power, the Faith of Divine Revelation is too weak a Principle to subdue the high Thoughts, the mighty Imaginations of these Men of Reason: Let us consider whether the Spiritual Incorporation of the Church may not appear to be a Point credible from such Arguments as they themselves do generally allow, and do commonly require from us, *i. e.* such Arguments as may be drawn from the Nature of the thing it self.

Now the Nature of any thing appears clearest (to us, who are not yet admitted to Vision, but must proceed upon Discourse) from the necessary Essential Properties of it, and the necessary Essential Properties of an Incorporate Body, may, I think be all of them compriz'd in the following particulars.

1. A Charter granted by some Superior Authority, by which they do subsist.

2. Some Privileges, which They, and They only who do subsist under that Charter, do in common enjoy under it.

3. A Power to govern, themselves according

according to the Fundamental Laws of that Charter.

4. A Right to administer that Government by Officers of their own.

5. A Right also to prescribe Rules or By-Laws to themselves for Orders sake, in Matters Indifferent, or Undetermin'd by their Fundamental Charter.

Now all this they readily grant to the Civil Sovereign, and think it a Power highly useful, and beneficial, to the good Government of the whole Community. And if they would be pleas'd to allow to God Almighty as much Authority, as they are pleas'd to do to his Vice-gerents, and withal would be pleas'd to allow, that the Conduct of the Spiritual Life to everlasting Peace and Happiness, is as useful and beneficial to Mankind as the Conduct of Civil Life to Temporal Peace and Happiness, can possibly be.

Upon these two reasonable Suppositions, that God can grant them, and that they are of Use and Benefit to Mankind, when granted, it will not be difficult to prove, that the Church is in Possession of all the Necessary and Essential Properties of an Incorporate Body. For

I. To be as brief as we can. What

C

is

is a Charter but the Sovereign Will authentickly express'd in Writing? The Church of God does not now subsist upon the Principles of Natural Religion, our own Disappointment of them, made it necessary for God Almighty, to give us a positive Instituted Religion, the Laws of which are deliver'd to us in his Divine Revelations; we have his Written Word, and this was written for our Learning, that it might become to us a Just and Adæquate Rule both of our Faith and Manners. This is our Divine Authentick Charter. Again,

2. What is Privilege but the Grant of something we could not make a Claim to, without the Power of that Charter by which it is granted. And in this Sense, under the Charter of an instituted and reveal'd Religion, the Church enjoys the most valuable Privileges. We now enjoy, what by Nature we cannot have, The Means of Grace in order to the Hopes of Glory. Nature weaken'd, enfeebl'd, corrupted by its own Depravations, is by these means again inabled to make good its Title to Everlasting Happiness: We who were sometimes afarr off, Aliens and Strangers to God and the Commonwealth of *Israel*, may now draw nigh with

with Faith, and have again access to him. The Word of Faith preach'd, the Instruments of Grace administred, the Powers of the World to come declar'd, do plainly shew us, that as by Nature we are the Children of Wrath, so by these invaluable, gratuitous, undeserv'd Privileges, we may become the adopted Sons of God. Again,

3. What is a Power to govern themselves according to the Fundamental Laws of that Charter, but only an Exemption from that Arbitrary Will and Power, whereby the Sovereign had a Right to command them, and a change of it into the moderated Terms of a Legal well-temper'd Government; so that the Sovereign Will cannot now otherwise command, then according to the Laws and Rules in the Charter granted. This Privilege of a legal, equitable, moderated Government, the Church enjoys in the fullest Perfection of it. For now we are not under a Covenant of Works, but under the Covenant of Grace. By the Principles of Natural Religion, the Soul that sinneth it shall dye, but now if we do sin, we may not dye. For under this stipulated Covenant of Grace, a Redemption is brought unto us,

a Propitiation is provided for us; and though we should transgress the Laws and Rules of our Charter, yet may we from thence plead against the Divine *Quo Warranto*, the Gracious Privilege of Repentance, through the Merits and Satisfaction of that great Redeemer and Advocate.

4. What is a Right to minister that Government by Officers of their own, but only a Privilege granted to secure them from the Depredations of Aliens and Strangers to their Society, such as the Sovereign, before the Charter granted, had a Right to send amongst them. Strangers are apt to have more regard for their private Interest, than for the publick Interest of the Community; and therefore it is no small Privilege to any Society to have the Power of administering their Government by Officers of their own, *i. e.* by such as will always have a Fellow-feeling and Compassion for them; by such as understand, and therefore will always have more regard for the publick Good of the Community, than their own private Interest and Advantage.

This

This Privilege the Church of God has always enjoy'd under the instituted Charter of his Written Word.

When Mankind, by Failure in their Duty upon the Principles of Natural Religion, had disappointed the end of the Sacred Polity, and were become unable to secure to themselves their eternal Peace and Happiness, then it was, as *St. Paul* tells us, we fell under the Power of *Satan*, not only a Stranger to our Nature, but as the Name imports, an Enemy, an Adversary to it ; then we fell under the Tyranny of Sin reigning by the Law ; then we came under the Command of the Law of Sin and Death, and from thence he tells us Death reign'd from *Adam* unto *Moses*.

But there it was we were first admitted to the Gracious Dispensation of the Written Word ; the Jewish Law was the first Written Law that was deliver'd to Mankind ; and though it did not express the Fulness of the Gospel, yet was it given us as a School-master to lead us through weak Elements into the fuller Mysteries of the Laws of Christ.

And there we learn that the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made

made us free from the Law of Sin and Death, *Rom.* 8. 2. Our Adversary the Devil, like a roaring Lyon, goes about seeking whom he may devour ; but the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin. For this reason it behov'd him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a Merciful and Faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People. And when he had suffer'd for us, and ascended up on High, he gave Gifts unto Men. Some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers ; and thus we obtain'd the Privilege, to have our Government administer'd by Officers of our own.

5. What is a Right to prescribe Rules or Bye-Laws to themselves in Matters Indifferent or Undetermin'd, by the Fundamental Laws of their Charter, but such a Privilege as is allow'd to all Societies whatsoever for Orders sake. The Architectonical Wisdom, as the Writers
of

of Politicks call it, having by its Charter fixt all the substantial parts of that Duty and Service which is requir'd from the Body, either of the whole Incorporated Society, or of every particular Member in it, leaves the Disposal of the attending ceremonial Circumstances to the Prudence and Discretion of those, whose Interest as well as Duty it is, to see that the Service intended be perform'd. And this not only because what suits some Times, Places, Persons, may not suit other Times, Places, Persons; and therefore the variety of Times, Places, Persons, must necessarily require a great variety of circumstantial Ceremonies: But chiefly to give the Community or Incorporated Society, an Opportunity of expressing their grateful and thankful Acknowledgements, by a ready Obedience in a cheerful and dutiful Performance of all that Honour and Service, which is due to the Author of their Being, for those Benefits and Advantages they receive by the said Society.

And this Privilege we find the Church of God in full Possession of. Thus the Apostolical Rule only commands in general, That all Things be done Decently and

and in Order, and then leaves the Application of Particulars, to the prudential Determination of those who are concern'd for them. Thus St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, when he had given them particular Answers to some special Inquiries tells them, *The rest I will set in Order when I come*,. This has been the great Work and Business of all the Synodical Labours of the Church, through all the Times and Ages of it. And thus the Church of *England* in Her Twentieth Article, declares, That the Church hath Power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and Authority in Controversies of Faith.

Thus it appears both from the Will of God reveal'd to us in his Written Word, and from the Nature of the Thing it self, that the Church of God is a Body, a Spiritual Incorporation, subsisting upon the Divine Charter of the Will of God, in Possession of all the necessary Essential Properties of such a Body, conveying to us the noblest Privileges for conducting Mankind to the Great and Spiritual Ends of the Sacred Polity, the compassing their Eternal Peace and Happiness. And if it really be so, then how Sacred, how venerable

nerable ought that Authority to be ! Which is thus founded upon the Will of God, subsisted by his Power, and conveys to us the greatest Benefits and Blessings, that Mankind can either desire or expect.

But when we found the Authority of Religion upon this bottom of Divine Authority, we seem to make it Independent of the Civil Power, and so indeed we do ; and from hence are urg'd by our Modern Scepticks, with all the Absurdities, Difficulties and Dangers arising from what they call *Imperium in Imperio*. We cannot make the Spiritual Power Independent of the Civil but we must make it interfere with, become an Enemy, and opposite to it. This is the grand Objection, the insuperable Prejudice against this way of stating the Question, which was first mov'd by the Atheist, improv'd and cultivated by the *Erastian*, and is at present the common Out-cry to banish from the Minds of Men all Notions of a Divine Authority.

But I hope we may be able effectually to encounter this Scare-crow of an Argument, shew it to have neither Strength nor Manliness, to be no more indeed than

D

Stick

Stick and Clout, when we come upon our next Inquiry to consider, the Headship and Sovereignty of this Spiritual Body ; how our Lord Jesus Christ the Head of this Body, dispenses this Divine Power, among the delegated and commission'd Officers and Ministers of this his Spiritual Kingdom. And as we shall from hence find it necessary to give to God that which is Gods; so shall we find our Spiritual Sovereign, will not only allow, but command us too, To give to *Cæsar* that which is *Cæsar's*.

F I N I S.

C